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By

D. T. PRAIGG

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Marriage Made Easy

By
D. T. PRAIGG

MARCH BROTHERS, *Publishers*
208, 210, 212 Wright Avenue, LEBANON, OHIO

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no 1

Marriage Made Easy

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM MASON—Manufacturer.

MRS. MASON—His wife.

ISABELLA MASON—Their daughter.

GEORGE ARNOLD—Isabella's lover.

SETTING

The stage shows a room in the home of William Mason, a well-to-do manufacturer. A table with books and an electric lamp on it occupies the center of the room. At one side is a davenport and around the table are four upholstered chairs. At right, a door opens into the hall; and at left, another door leads into an adjoining room. George Arnold has asked the manufacturer for the hand of Isabella, his daughter, and as the play opens Mr. Mason begins to question him.

SCENE

MR. MASON: And you and Isabella were in high school together?

GEORGE: Yes, sir. We graduated at the same time.

MR. MASON: It was nip and tuck which should stand at the foot of the class, wasn't it?

GEORGE [*smiling*]: Oh, no, sir: I staid quite easily at the foot. She was next, though.

MR. MASON: And now you think you want to marry?

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

MR. MASON [*raising his eyebrows*]: Did she propose to you or you to her?

GEORGE [*hesitatingly*]: The proposal was mutual.

MR. MASON: Mutual? How, mutual?

GEORGE [*twisting around in his chair, as if uncomfortable*]: Well, she said it is leap year and asked me how I'd like to leap.

MR. MASON: And, of course, you told her?

GEORGE: Yes, sir. I said I was something of a jumper, if there was anything to jump at.

MR. MASON [*laughing*]: That was very well said, and then you jumped?

GEORGE: Yes, sir. It wasn't a matter to hesitate long over.

MR. MASON: No, I suppose not. Do you propose to marry *into* My family or *out* of it?

GEORGE [*seemingly puzzled*]: I don't think I quite understand.

MR. MASON [*smiling*]: Well, a man, who marries *into* a family, adds one more for the father-in-law to support. A man who marries *out* of a family, takes his wife away and supports her himself.

GEORGE: I recognize the distinction, but Isabella and I haven't talked that over yet.

MR. MASON: Oh! That is a point, then, not yet settled?

GEORGE: No, sir. We haven't come to that.

MR. MASON: You'd better decide it at your early convenience, for it is important to me.

GEORGE: Yes, I appreciate that. We'll talk it over when I see her.

MR. MASON: I mention it because two young men married *into* my family five years ago and both are here yet, and I have been compelled to reduce wages in the factory to meet the added expense. Another such marriage might cause a strike.

GEORGE: Yes, I see how you might be taking a risk.

MR. MASON: What salary do you earn now?

GEORGE: Twenty-five a week.

MR. MASON [*taking a piece of blank paper from the table and writing on it and speaking slowly as he writes*]: One gown, two fifty; two pairs of shoes, forty; six pairs silk stockings, thirty; one wrap, one fifty; three silk waists, seventy-five; one street suit, one fifty. There's eight months of your salary gone and you haven't got anything for yourself or paid rent or provided anything to eat.

GEORGE: But Isabella said you'd give her the first year's outfit.

MR. MASON: You seem to be arranging the details nicely. Were you ever in love before?

GEORGE: No, sir. Not since I was quite young—just a kid.

MR. MASON [*smiling genially*]: Ah! I see. Puppy love, eh?

GEORGE: Yes, sir. That's what the first ebullitions are called, I believe.

MR. MASON: Were girls you loved then like Isabella?

GEORGE: Oh, no, sir! They were her opposites.

MR. MASON: And their parents the opposite of Isabella's parents, too, I suppose.

GEORGE: Yes, sir, they were poor.

MR. MASON [*surprised*]: I see you've reached the age of discretion.

GEORGE: Yes, I'm wiser now than I was then.

MR. MASON: And now you are willing to marry on a salary of twenty-five a week a girl who spends a thousand a year on clothes alone?

GEORGE: Yes, I'm willing to take the chance.

MR. MASON: And you are not afraid that love's young dream may turn out to be a nightmare?

GEORGE: No, not at all. I'm game.

MR. MASON [*rising and extending his hand which George grasps heartily*]: So I see! Very game, indeed. We'll talk this over in the family and I'll give you an answer in an hour. In the meantime, I want you to understand that I am favorably impressed with your courage, though I may have some question of your judgment. But you are young yet and that defect may be well overlooked. [*They shake hands cordially. George goes out at right. Isabella and her mother enter at left.*]

ISABELLA [*expectantly*]: Well, father?

MR. MASON [*looking around casually*]: Well?

MRS. MASON: Well?

ISABELLA [*smiling*]: What did you tell him, father?

MR. MASON: Nothing.

ISABELLA [*excitedly*]: Nothing!

MRS. MASON [*in a hurt tone*]: Nothing, William, nothing?

MR. MASON: Well, I made some inquiries into his prospects and his hopes and fears, but that was all.

MRS. MASON [*contemptuously*]: The idea of treating marriage as a business proposition!

MR. MASON: Well, if it isn't that, what is it?

ISABELLA [*breathlessly*]: But you like him father?

MRS. MASON: Of course, he likes him. How could he help it.

MR. MASON: Yes, very much, indeed! Very much, indeed!

ISABELLA: I knew you would, he's so enterprising.

MR. MASON: He seems to be a young man of fine courage.

ISABELLA: That's what first attracted me to him. I'm so glad you like him.

MR. MASON: He's making twenty-five a week and isn't afraid to marry a girl who'll spend all his salary on clothes. His courage is something marvelous.

ISABELLA: Yes, but I'll have enough to last a year when we marry.

MR. MASON: Yes, he intimated quite clearly that I would be held up for the first year's outfit. But why do you want to marry?

MRS. MASON: Why, William, all the girls in her set are married and she's still single. It's a shame, when she should have married first.

MR. MASON: But she isn't twenty yet.

MRS. MASON [*disdainfully*]: Twenty! I'd say she isn't, but some of the girls in her set are mothers now.

MR. MASON: And their children quite motherless, I presume.

MRS. MASON [*haughtily*]: Shame on you! The young mother is the ideal mother, William.

MR. MASON: I thought they got more motherly with age. And she wants to marry and you want her to marry because all her set are married?

MRS. MASON: Why, of course! Do you think we want an old maid in the family?

MR. MASON: But how is he going to keep her?

ISABELLA: Mother and I have talked it over and we'll stay here a year and save expenses.

MR. MASON [*ironically*]: Save who's expense?

ISABELLA: Why, ours.

MR. MASON: At mine?

ISABELLA: Oh, we both won't cost you any more than I do now.

MR. MASON: That's what the others said—just a year—but they're here yet.

MRS. MASON [*pleadingly*]: Now, William, don't be too hard on them. You know how we were.

MR. MASON: I know how you were.

MRS. MASON: Do you mean to slur me, William?

MR. MASON: Why, no. Such a thing was farthest from my thoughts.

MRS. MASON: Then don't speak that way again, especially in the presence of our daughter.

MR. MASON: What concerns me most in this matter is the fellows in the factory.

MRS. MASON [*looking startled*]: Why, what about them?

MR. MASON: Why, if we add another son-in-law, we'll have to reduce wages again.

ISABELLA: But you wouldn't have to take a great deal off, would you?

MR. MASON: That depends on how much the new luxury will add to our expenses.

MRS. MASON [*musingly*]: Well, suppose, William, our expenses should be increased fifteen hundred a year. I don't think it'll be that much, but just take that as a basis.

MR. MASON: Well, it isn't hard to figure. We are now employing seventy-five men and that would mean a reduction of twenty each.

MRS. MASON: Twenty each for the year, you mean?

MR. MASON: Yes, certainly. Twenty for the year.

MRS. MASON: Well, that's mighty little, I think, for an employee to give for an advantageous marriage for his employer's daughter.

ISABELLA: It certainly is, if that is all it would take off.

MR. MASON [*looking at Mrs. Mason*]: Advantageous? To whom?

MRS. MASON: Why, to Isabella! She's nearly twenty and she just must marry.

MR. MASON: Is George at twenty-five a week the only one in sight?

MRS. MASON [*raising her voice*]: Now, listen at you! Of course, he's the only one. Do you suppose Isabella can love just anybody?

MR. MASON: Really, I don't know. But I hadn't thought of it as a love match.

MRS. MASON: Well, it is. They are devoted to each other.

MR. MASON: I don't doubt it. He seems to be a very enterprising young man.

ISABELLA: And we are both just as devoted to you, father. And he's just as bright as he is enterprising. You ought to hear him talk.

MR. MASON: I've heard him.

ISABELLA: But about the moon and the stars, I mean.

MR. MASON: No, thanks! I don't care for that kind. I live down here.

MRS. MASON: But you do like flights of the imagination, William. You know you do.

MR. MASON: Not when they fly at me in the shape of another mouth to feed.

MRS. MASON: Oh, you're so prosy! I do hope you'll cultivate sentiment sometime.

MR. MASON: I'm afraid I never will till I get my harp in heaven.

MRS. MASON: They'll want to have a church wedding, of course.

ISABELLA: Yes, and George and I want to go to Niagara. I want him to see the falls, they're so inspiring.

MR. MASON: That's a long way for the groom to walk, isn't it?

ISABELLA [*smiling*]: Now, you're making fun of me. We'll go on the money you give me for my bridal present.

MR. MASON: And I'll pay for his inspiration!

MRS. MASON: Don't treat the subject that way, William. It's heartless! It really is heartless!

MR. MASON: Well, there's one thing certain, Isabella. You can't get married and have that imported Spitz, too.

ISABELLA: But you promised me the Spitz.

MR. MASON: Yes, but I didn't know then that you intended to marry. You must choose between George and the Spitz.

ISABELLA [*turning to Mrs. Mason*]: What would you do, mother?

MRS. MASON [*decidedly*]: Why, Isabella, I'd marry. When George gets able, he'll give you a dog. Of course, he will.

ISABELLA: Yes, I know he will. [*Turning to Mr. Mason*]: I guess I'll marry, father.

MR. MASON: All right! Fix it up to suit yourselves, but don't blame me if there's a strike at the factory.

MRS. MASON [*showing concern*]: Do you think such a thing is possible, William?

MR. MASON: A strike is always possible when wages are reduced. I'll call the superintendent, though, and tell him to notify the men of a five per cent. reduction to take effect Monday. I want to get it in before the marriage.

ISABELLA: Will it affect your salary, too, father?

MR. MASON: Oh, no! My salary as president and manager will be increased.

MRS. MASON [*admiringly*]: What a fine business man you are, William. But, of course, Isabella must marry, even if the factory closes down.

MR. MASON [*shrugging his shoulders*]: Why, certainly! Stop all the machines except the marriage machine!

MRS. MASON [*angrily*]: Do you mean to insinuate, William, that I am anxious for Isabella to marry and am scheming to bring it about?

MR. MASON: Why, not at all. I can see that you are nearly heartbroken over it.

MRS. MASON: Yes, I do hate to give her up.

MR. MASON: What worries me is we won't give her up. But I'll call the superintendent. [*He goes out at left.*]

MRS. MASON [*musingly*]: A five per cent. reduction! That ought to be more than fifteen hundred.

ISABELLA: He's preparing for possible 'contingencies. I wouldn't interfere, if I were you. Let him get all he can. I was afraid we'd have to sell some bonds.

MRS. MASON [*decidedly*]: I would never consent to that. We mustn't impair our capital. [*George enters at right and shakes hands with Mrs. Mason and Isabella.*]

GEORGE [*looking around the room*]: Mr. Mason isn't here?

ISABELLA: He's at the telephone. He'll be down in a few minutes.

GEORGE: He told me he'd see me in an hour.

MRS. MASON: Yes, he said you'd be back. But it's all arranged now. It'll be a church wedding and you'll take a bridal trip to Niagara, and then you'll stay here a year, anyway.

GEORGE [*ecstatically*]: To Niagara! Oh, Joy! To see its majestic waters! To hear its thunderous voice!

ISABELLA [*Looking at her mother*]: I wish father had heard him say that.

MRS. MASON: It was, indeed, beautifully expressed.

GEORGE: Are you as happy as I am, Isabella?

ISABELLA [*her face radiant*]: Oh, so happy! [*Her countenance suddenly changing*]: But I had to give up my Spitz.

GEORGE [*surprised*]: Gave up your Spitz?

ISABELLA [*pathetically*]: Yes, for you, George. I gave him up for you.

GEORGE [*sorrowfully*]: Was the sacrifice necessary?

ISABELLA: Yes, I couldn't have you and the Spitz, too. But I'm glad I made the sacrifice. It shows how much I love you.

GEORGE: It was noble, Isabella, noble!

ISABELLA [*resignedly*]: Yes, when I wanted a Spitz even before I knew we loved.

MRS. MASON: You'll have to excuse us for a while, George. We want to look over some samples for the wedding gown. William will be in directly. [*She and Isabella leave at left.*]

ISABELLA [*behind the scenes*]: Oh, father! George is here!

MR. MASON [*his voice in the distance*]: I'll be down in a moment. [*George takes a book from the table and turns the pages listlessly, Mr. Mason enters at left.*]

MR. MASON [*advancing and shaking George's hand vigorously*]: The women folks have it all arranged, I think, and I want to congratulate you on the favorable auspices under which you will marry *into* my family.

GEORGE: That's decided, then, is it?

MR. MASON: Yes, you marry *in*, not *out*. And, let me say, that Isabella, woman like, has already begun to make sacrifices.

GEORGE: The dear girl! She spoke of it and my heart went out to her as never before.

MR. MASON: Yes, she has given up her dream of an imported Spitz till you are able to buy one for her.

GEORGE: She has indeed made a generous sacrifice.

MR. MASON: Yes, very few girls would give up a dog for a man.

GEORGE: What disinterested affection! I can never doubt her now.

MR. MASON: Yes, it borders on the pathetic, when she's so young. But she is not alone in her sacrifices. Seventy-five men will make sacrifices, too.

GEORGE: Seventy-five? But is that necessary, Mr. Mason.

MR. MASON: Yes, for your happiness and that you may hear the crash, the thundering crash, of Niagara's waters.

ISABELLA [*entering at left*]: You're wanted at the telephone, father.

MR. MASON [*rising and taking George by the hand*]: Remember, you are to be one of us. If you don't see what you want, ask for it. If we haven't got it in the house, order it and have it charged to me. That's the way they all do.

GEORGE [*emotionally*]: Your kindness overwhelms me. I can never repay you.

MR. MASON [*shaking his hand more vigorously*]: You don't need to. I am really your debtor. Any kind of a man around the house is better than a snarling, biting Spitz. As soon as you and Isabella are off

for Niagara, we'll send a dray for your trunk. [*He gives George's hand another vigorous shake and goes out hurriedly at left.*]

GEORGE: I'll have to tell the boss at the store about it and ask for a vacation. How long will we be at Niagara?

ISABELLA: I don't know yet, but we'll stay as long as any of my set stayed when they married. Not less than two weeks, anyhow. You'd better ask for a month off.

GEORGE [*questioningly*]: There's no danger of it being postponed?

ISABELLA: None whatever. Mother's already telephoned for a reporter.

GEORGE: All right! I'll see the boss as soon as I get back to the store.

ISABELLA [*emotionally*]: You may feel absolutely sure. I've even given up the Spitz.

GEORGE: How generous!

ISABELLA [*putting her handkerchief to her eyes*]: Yes, it is a great disappointment, but I'd do anything for you.

GEORGE: What a wonderful thing is love! It's fathomless in its intensity when it's so real!

ISABELLA: Yes, I never knew what it was till I gave up my hope of a Spitz.

GEORGE [*looking at his watch*]: I'd better be off. I'll speak to the boss as soon as I get to the store. Goodby! [*He goes out at right.*] [*Mrs. Mason enters and looks at Isabella with surprise as she sits with the handkerchief to her eyes.*]

MRS. MASON: You didn't let George see you crying, did you?

ISABELLA [*her voice a sob*]: I couldn't help it, mother. You know it was to be a white Spitz and none of the girls in my set ever had any but those common black ones.

MRS. MASON [*consolingly*]: Well, life is nearly all sacrifices, Isabella, when it is lived under the inspiration of high ideals. [*Sighing*] Heaven only knows how many I've made!

ISABELLA [*sobbing*]: But you had never set your heart on a white Spitz, Mother.

MRS. MASON: No, but you must remember Spitz dogs weren't fashionable when I was young.

ISABELLA: But if they had been, and you would have had to give up marriage or the Spitz, which would you have done?

MRS. MASON: After having lived with your father thirty years, I can say with truth, Isabella, that I would have given up the Spitz; that is, not so much for him as for marriage.

ISABELLA [*wonderingly*]: For marriage?

MRS. MASON: Yes, the relation, not the man. Marriage should be considered in the abstract, never in the concrete. The relation is primary; the man, secondary.

ISABELLA: Is that the way you would have me consider it?

MRS. MASON: Certainly. You stand on the brink of a chasm. You are about to fall headlong into its lonesome depths. George steps in between you and the abyss below. You fall into his arms. He saves you. That's all one can expect of a man. [*Mr. Mason enters at left.*]

MR. MASON: Well, it's just as I expected. The men refused to stand a five per cent. reduction.

MRS. MASON [*excitedly*]: Then there'll be a strike?

MR. MASON: No; they made a proposition to accept three per cent. and I've accepted it.

MRS. MASON: But that won't yield us fifteen hundred, will it?

MR. MASON: Oh, yes, fully that! I made it five at first, thinking they'd offer to compromise.

MRS. MASON [*looking admiringly at him*]: You're an ideal business man, William.

MR. MASON: Yes, I'd be a very rich man if I hadn't married.

MRS. MASON [*in a hurt tone*]: Do you mean I have clogged your steps?

MR. MASON: By no means. You've accelerated them.

MRS. MASON: Then, why did you say if you hadn't married?

MR. MASON [*apologetically*]: Did I say that? It must have been a slip of the tongue.

MRS. MASON [*sternly*]: Then I'd guard it more closely in the future, especially as we will have another son-in-law to look to us as examples.

MR. MASON: I guess he's already been looking.

MRS. MASON: How could he have been looking to us?

MR. MASON: Why, as caretakers of sons-in-law.

MRS. MASON: Won't you ever get over that, William? James has been with us but five years and John only four years and seven months. That's a mighty short time when you come to consider a whole life.

MR. MASON: Quite too short, I imagine, for fellows who are living off another fellow.

MRS. MASON: But neither of them are strong and you know it.

MR. MASON: They're both strong enough to eat three meals a day.

MRS. MASON [*clasping her hands and assuming a tranquil air*]: Well, for my part, I thank my stars that our daughters have married so well!

MR. MASON: When George comes into the family, you can thank the moon, too. He'll round out the galaxy for us beautifully.

MRS. MASON: About that reduction of wages, William. Are you quite sure it will make a sufficient saving, and we won't have to sell any of our bonds or stocks?

MR. MASON: Oh, yes! Quite sure.

MRS. MASON: Well I would never consent to impair our capital. You know how helpless I'd be if I were left alone in the world.

MR. MASON: Yes, with your peculiar field of enterprise exhausted by Isabella's marriage, you certainly would be helpless. [*Mrs. Mason smiles contemptuously and turns her back on him. George enters at left.*]

GEORGE [*looking down at the floor as he comes towards them*]: I'm afraid, Isabella, we'll have to postpone our marriage.

ISABELLA: Oh, George!

MRS. MASON [*breathlessly*]: Why, what's the matter?

GEORGE: The boss told me I'd better look for another job when I asked for a vacation to get married.

MRS. MASON: Discharged you because you are going to marry?

ISABELLA: Why, that's heartless!

GEORGE: Yes, and he was insulting, too.

MRS. MASON: He was? What did he say?

GEORGE: Why, he said Old Mason already has two loafers as sons-in-law and he might as well have another.

MRS. MASON: The brute! I'm glad you won't have to work for him, anyhow.

MR. MASON [*rising and placing his hand on George's arm*]: Don't worry over that, George. Honest industry is always envious of contented sloth. Neither James nor John has ever worked a day since they married *into* my family and I don't want the rule broken. Besides, if the wedding should be postponed, Isabella might change her mind and want that blasted Spitz.

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